

CHAPTER VII

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

The preparation of the Historical and Cultural Resources element of the Master Plan Update was greatly assisted by material contained in previous planning studies by the Abington Planning Board including a earlier edition of the Master Plan and other Planning Board reports and studies. In addition, it drew on information and material available from the Dyer Memorial Library and its Director, Joice Himawan and Reference Librarian, Pamela Whiting, the Abington Historical Commission and the Historical Society of Old Abington, Inc.. The publication: Images of America, Abington by Sharon Orcutt Peters; Remembering Old Abington, the Collected Writings of Martha Campbell, Edited by Donald Cann and John Galluzzo; and, Abington a Postcard history Series by Donald Cann and John Galluzzo. Also very useful was information, background and insights contributed by Elizabeth Shea, Joseph Shea and Kate Kelley on historical sites and events. These provided significant insights and perspectives to this edition of the Abington Master Plan Update.

Abington has a rich history that dates back to its first settlement in 1668 as an agricultural community by European settlers. Originally, Abington was part of Bridgewater but was separated and incorporated as a town in 1712. It was commonplace in early New England towns for small communities to break off from large towns because of travel time to church, changing parish boundaries; or because of political and/or economic issues. After incorporation, the land area of Abington remained the same for the next 162 years. In the year 1874 the eastern portion of Abington was split off and became the Town of Rockland; and, in the following year, 1875 the southern part of town was incorporated as the Town of South Abington (now Whitman).

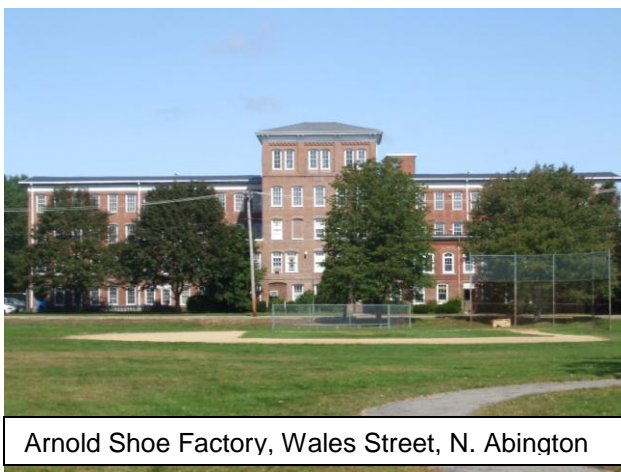
At the time of its incorporation as a town, Abington was established as a small farming community and had developed a center at Bedford and Washington Streets. By 1800 the town had further developed an economy with sawmills, a tannery, a grist mill and pottery shop. Abington residents contributed to and participated in the American Revolution and country's founding with service in militias and support of the war efforts for independence. Improvement of the Bedford Turnpike (Rt. 18) stimulated additional growth and the town population doubled between 1775 and 1820.

Abington's history is closely tied to the shoe industry and its development from a cottage industry to an important center for the manufacture of shoes in the 19th century. By 1832 there were six shoe manufacturers around North Abington and Abington Center and a number of businesses and industries that were subsidiaries of and connected to shoe manufacturing. Abington firms also manufactured wooden boxes in which shoes were shipped, tacks and brads, shoe lasts, heels and webbing components to serve the increased demand of the industry. In the census of 1850 it was reported that there were 36 boot and/or shoe manufacturers in Abington. Neighborhoods grew around Abington

Center, south along Bedford Street, and at North Abington, while the western portion of the town remained agricultural. During this time what are now the towns of Rockland and Whitman were part of Old Abington and it was the reported to be the wealthiest town in Plymouth County.

The Old Colony Railroad rail service was initiated in 1845 when train transportation was made available from South Boston to Plymouth. Twice daily round trip rail service was made on the Old Colony line that facilitated additional growth in town, and influenced the movement of the industrial and residential focus of North Abington from Bedford and Randolph Streets toward the Adams Street/Birch Street/ North Avenue area and to Abington Center. Other shoe manufacturing firms developed along Plymouth Street with workers' housing located nearby.

The start of the Civil War and demand to outfit Union soldiers with shoes greatly expanded the local shoe manufacturing industry and it became an important part of the historical development of Abington. The Old Colony Railroad, trolley cars and the shoe industry were important factors influencing growth in town during the latter part of the 19th Century and early part of the 20th Century. The railroad with its twice daily trips to and from Boston to Plymouth with stops in Abington and North Abington along with trolley car service made the movement of people and goods much easier and the town more accessible. During this period, many Irish and other European immigrants who came to Boston seeking work were attracted to jobs in Abington in the burgeoning shoe industry. Once settled in Abington, these newcomers looked forward to starting a new life and contributed greatly to the Town's economic, social and cultural development and heritage. Much of the housing developed to accommodate the influx of workers and the growing population of Abington was built within walking distance of shoe factories in Abington Center; North Abington and along Plymouth Street.



Arnold Shoe Factory, Wales Street, N. Abington

The shoe industry in Abington began to decline by the early 20th Century but it remained as an important factor in the local economy and in the Town's development through the 1920's. Some shoe manufacturing buildings remain as reminders of the important role that shoe manufacturing had in Abington's history and the influence it had on the development of the Town. One of these is the red brick Arnold Shoe Factory, built in 1875 and located at 200 Wales Street in North Abington.

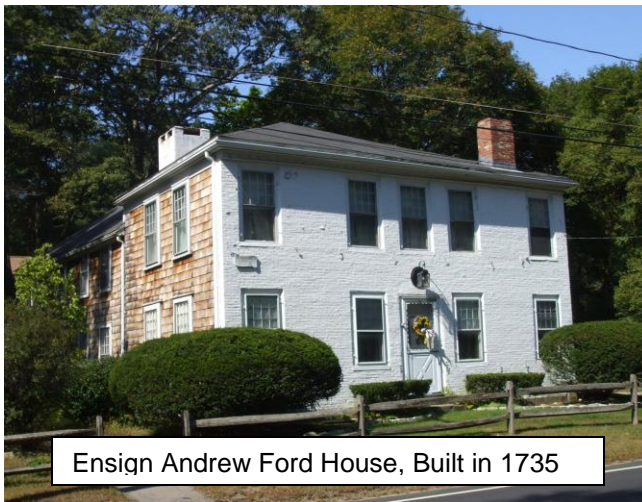
Another dominant former shoe manufacturing building is the former Crossett Shoe factory built in 1888 located at 10 Railroad Street. It now serves one of Abington's leading employers, New England Art Publishers. Other former shoe factory buildings that have survived and have been re-used include: The Lucius Faxon Shoe factory (1845), 5-7 Brockton Avenue; the Stetson Vaughan Boot and Shoe factory (1845), 523 Plymouth

Street; the James Whitmarsh Shoe factory (1847) at 526 Washington Street; and the Lewis A. Crossett Company's administrative office building (1920) at 81 Birch Street. The Crossett Company building has served as a temporary high school for the town and is now the Mildred Alford Nursing Home.

The economic downturn of Great Depression in the United States began with the collapse of Wall Street in 1929 and had a devastating effect on shoe manufacturing in Abington. The Great Depression effectively ended the manufacturing era in Abington and the town began a new chapter in its development. The economic recovery prompted by the "New Deal" federal relief programs spawned an economic upsurge that was continued by World War II production. Since World War II, Abington has become more of a bedroom-service oriented community with its residents primarily dependent upon jobs located outside of the community.

Historic Sites

The Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) that together with the Massachusetts Historical Commission is under the Office of the Secretary of State lists a whole host of meaningful historical properties and sites within Abington. The MACRIS inventory lists 28 properties in Abington that are dated prior to 1800. These are shown in the accompanying Table VII-1. As can be seen from the table, the oldest structure in Abington is the Ensign Andrew Ford House, built in 1735, located at 770



Ensign Andrew Ford House, Built in 1735

Washington Street. The listing also notes that there are many other historically significant properties located along Washington Street that are excellent examples of homes built in the uniquely American Colonial architectural style. Consideration should be given to preserving these and other historically significant properties from destruction and deterioration. Toward this end, the Town has established the Abington Historical Commission (AHC) whose stated mission is to preserve and protect the

historic resources of the Town of Abington. The Commission's current projects are the establishment of a historic district and the passage of a demolition delay by-law. In addition, the Commission seeks to identify and give recognition to projects having national importance and gaining their nomination to the National Register. This requires great effort and coordination and communication with Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). These are very worthy pursuits designed to preserve and protect the many historical buildings of Abington and deserve thoughtful consideration and support of the Town.

Table VII-1
Listing of Abington Historic Properties 1700-1799

Property	Location	Year
Ford, Ens. Andrew House	770 Washington St	1735
Ford - Richards - Cobb Millseat	Chestnut St	1740
Island Grove Park - Central Burying Ground	Park Ave	1750
Richards Family Burial Ground	Chestnut St	1750
Orcutt, Emerson House	500 Randolph St	1751
Reed, Capt. Thomas House	821 Plymouth St	1751
Abington District #2 Schoolhouse	104 Hancock St	1755
Remington, Thomas House	28 Thicket St	1755
Noyes, Jacob House	62 Linwood St	1758
Townsend, Thomas House	300 Plymouth St	1761
Dunham, Ezra House	554 Hancock St	1765
Ford, Jacob House, Old	662 Old Randolph St	1765
Shaw, Lt. Nicolas 'New' House	1121 Bedford St	1767
Beaver Brook Millstones	Chestnut St	1770
Chamberlain Ten-Footer Shoe Shop	300 Plymouth St	1773
Chamberlin, John - Warren, David House	392 Plymouth St	1773
Nash, John House	183 Summer St	1775
King, John House	350 Washington St	1780
Shaw, Calvin House	580 Adams St	1780
Browne, Lt. Samuel House	303 Washington St	1790
Norton, Samuel Jr. House	237 Washington St	1790
Nash, Sarah Browne House	601 Washington St	1792
Noyes, Lt. Ephraim House	248 Linwood St	1793
Noyes, Hannah Shaw House	333 Groveland St	1797
Reed, Ezekiel House	222 Centre Ave	1797
Gould Family Burial Ground	59 Sylvan Ct	1798
Thaxter, Dr. Gridley House	409 Washington St	1798
Gloyd, Col. Daniel House	93 Adams St	1799

Source: Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

In addition to the properties listed as built between 1700 and 1799 Abington has 168 historic homes, buildings and sites listed on the MACRIS inventory dating from 1800 to 1899. It is this period in the history of the Town when the shoe manufacturing industry was established and began to flourish. As the Town of Abington's shoe manufacturers began to prosper, the owners built large factories and homes consistent with the new wealth that was brought into the community. Notable factory buildings built during this time include: the Arnold Shoe factory, 1875; Crossett Shoe factory, 1888; Lucius Faxon Shoe factory 1845; Stetson Vaughan Boot and Shoe factory, 1845; and, the James Whitmarsh Shoe factory, 1847.

While workers lived within walking distance of the factories, successful mill owners' and merchants' homes were more distant from manufacturing sites with some near Abington Center and others located on "Palace Row" on Adams Street in North Abington. "Palace Row" has been identified by the Abington Historical Commission as the buildings between 160 and 238 Adams Street for their historical/architectural significance includes historic homes in the Greek Revival, Queen Anne, Queen Anne-Italianate, and Classical Revival architectural styles which can be seen to this day.

The house at 704 Hancock Street in Abington is where world heavyweight boxing champion, John L. Sullivan, spent his retirement years. John L. Sullivan, known as "The Boston Strong Boy" was the first heavyweight champion of gloved boxing reigning from February 7, 1882 to 1892. John L. Sullivan was a colorful and lively character who would often ride through the streets of Abington in an Irish jaunting cart.

The "Musterfield" Neighborhood in the northeast section of Abington is historically significant and derives its name from the large open field tract of land used by Civil War soldiers for musters, marching and drilling exercises and use by the Militia for war games as late as 1909. The "Musterfield" area is the tract of land in the northeast corner of Abington that includes "Camp" and "Battery" streets and lies east of the Old Colony rail line, south of Pine Street and north of North Avenue.

The architecturally significant and historic North Abington Train Depot on Railroad Street was built in 1893. The Peerless Theatre building located nearby at 84 Railroad Street was built in 1894 as a harness and saddle store by Henry G. Crossley and in 1915 became a popular neighborhood movie theatre for many years after. North Avenue at the intersection with the Old Colony rail line was the scene of what has been referred to as the "Abington Train Riot" a major historical event in the Town's history.

A complete listing of the properties on the MACRIS inventory is contained in the Appendix.

Historic and Cultural Events

The history of Abington includes its important role in meetings of Abolitionists who came by the hundreds from Boston and surrounding areas to congregate at Island Grove Park and to rally against slavery. Open air anti-slavery meetings were held at Island Grove between 1846 and 1865. William Lloyd Garrison, famed Abolitionist, and editor of the "Liberator" paper was a participant and once noted as a speaker at these meetings. Island Grove Park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its significance in the Abolitionist movement and the important social/recreational/cultural role that the Grove has played in the historical development of Abington.

On August 16, 1893 the "Abington Train Riot" took place when town constables and workers from the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad fought over the town's right to allow the Abington & Rockland Street Railway Company to build a streetcar track across the railroad's tracks at North Avenue. A crew of 300 railroad workers was

ordered to tear up about 20 feet of electric trolley tracks that crossed over the rail right-of-way. The fighting was reported to have lasted for ninety minutes and as a result, the New Haven Railroad was forced to pay \$15,000 in damages and five railroad employees were given jail sentences. The town eventually built the trolley line, and as a "peace offering," the railroad built the North Abington Depot building. The architecturally significant North Abington Depot building was designed by architect Bradford Gilbert in a style influenced by H. H. Richardson the famed architect who designed the Trinity Church in Boston

In 1904 the H. H. Buffum Company built the first eight cylinder car offered for sale in the United States in the historically significant factory building (1897) located at 123 Centre Avenue in Abington. Herbert H. Buffum, for which the company took its name, initially came to Abington to build machinery for the shoe manufacturing industry. The Buffum firm subsequently diversified to also build bicycles, automobiles and motor boats at the site.

In the year 1912 the Town of Abington celebrated its bicentennial of incorporation as a town with a week long celebration that included Abington, Rockland (East Abington) and Whitman (South Abington). The celebration included a parade, re-enactment of the Abington Train Riot and the dedication of the Island Grove Soldiers and Sailors Memorial. Island Grove Park has made and continues to make a significant contribution to the social and cultural history of the Town of Abington. The Grove is a much used and treasured resource of the community.



The Saint Patrick's Day Parade in Abington is an annual event that attracts thousands of parade participants, visitors and residents from the South Shore and is one of the largest parades south of Boston. Abington has a strong Irish heritage with many residents who are descendants of immigrants who found a home here after escaping the Great Potato Famine in Ireland in 1845. Many of these Irish immigrants took jobs constructing

the Old Colony Rail Line or in local shoe factories and settled in Abington to start a new life and contributed greatly to the Town's development.

Other annual traditions that take place in Town during the summer are the Summer Concert series; the Circus performances, and the Forth of July Parade and Fireworks Celebration. These cultural events help make Abington stand out among South Shore towns and make it a special place.

The historic events that took place within Abington along with its historic sites provide a valuable historic and cultural resource that is unique to the Town and set it apart from all other places. These events and sites also provide an understanding of how the community developed and can be a source of great community pride and promotion. These resources form an important part of the fabric of the community and contribute to the town residents' sense of pride, place and quality of life.

Historic and Cultural Goals and Objectives

Promoting the historically significant sites and cultural events in Abington is an important goal and can derive important economic benefit and other less tangible benefits. If the historical sites in Abington were properly identified and publicized the town might attract visitors who are in the area visiting other places of historical interest. Boston and the South Shore area are rich in history and contain many noteworthy attractions. Perhaps the Abington sites are in and of themselves not significant enough attractions to draw people; but tourists or visitors who already in the area may find themselves drawn to local sites. In addition, there is much to be gained in terms of increasing community pride by publishing and educating the citizens of Abington about their history and heritage.

To promote and increase awareness of all historically significant sites and structures in the Town of Abington.

A small brochure describing the history of Abington, its historic sites and places of interest would be a valuable asset in marketing the community to residents and visitors. This potential should be explored with the Plymouth County Development Council (PCDC) to determine whether this would be worthwhile to pursue or if the PCDC could assist with achieving other economic development goals.

To work toward the establishment of an historic district(s) as a means of protecting and preserve existing historical structures.

The Abington Historical Commission should develop a specific historic preservation vision for the proposed Historic District(s) to better inform people of what they are hopeful of accomplishing.

To work toward the enacting a demolition delay by-law to preserve and protect historic structures from being razed and to maintain our historical character

Explore possible funding opportunities that would enable the preservation and protection of historic structures that are threatened with demolition through acquisition or other means such as Town acceptance and approval of the Community Preservation Act or other funding mechanisms.

To encourage the general population of the community to be involved in historical and cultural events.

Undertake a program of community education to promote historic preservation and promote annual cultural events in the community that add to the cohesiveness and fabric of the community.